

# Case Study: Newspaper E-Prints

## Background

The mission of the National Digital Stewardship Alliance is to establish, maintain, and advance the capacity to preserve our nation's digital resources for the benefit of present and future generations. The NDSA's Content Working Group is focusing on investigating guidelines for the selection of significant content, discovery of at-risk digital content or collections, and engaging all stakeholders in the process of acquiring, preserving, and providing access to the content. Working group members are developing case studies and/or models to share broadly with all stakeholders, from content producers to cultural heritage organizations. The goal of this case study is to engage all members of the community in the preservation of content and to encourage the cultivation of relationships that could enable preservation. This case study addresses at-risk news content.

## About Newspaper E-Prints

Since the shift to "digital-first" publishing, publishers increasingly have abandoned microfilming of newspapers or maintaining their print morgues. Now, newspapers produce a PDF printmaster to send to their printer. A 2011 report produced for the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program by a team from the Center for Research Libraries provides a glimpse inside the workplaces that produce these types of files: *Preserving News in the Digital Environment: Mapping the Newspaper Industry in Transition* (2011).<sup>i</sup>

## Historical Value

A newspaper defines its community's identity, and the loss of even a few months of their newspaper creates gaps in that community's recorded history. High usage of the digitized historical newspapers demonstrates the value of this content to many user groups indicating that the preservation of current newspapers should be a high priority. Cultural memory organizations should coordinate with multiple partners to preserve newspapers and make them freely available online.

## Recognized Opportunities

Most newspaper publishers neither preserve the PDF printmasters nor do they microfilm the printed issues, resulting in a loss of current newspaper content for future generations. The fact that the vast majority of current U.S. newspapers are printed from an "e-print" file offers a unique, cost effective opportunity to work with publishers to capture and preserve that file.

## Target Audiences

These audiences share multiple levels of local, state, national, and international interest, but based on user feedback, discussions, and publications, the newspapers have proven of relevance to:

- Local communities: public libraries; newspaper publishers; genealogical societies; county and local governments; K-12 educators
- State-wide communities: Academic researchers; lay historians; university students and professors; archives
- National and International communities: Trending researchers; political scholars; economic analysts

## Educating Stakeholders

Cultural memory organizations should communicate the role that newspaper preservation plays in community history to stakeholders through multiple venues:

- Publishers: state press association conferences; trade shows; and presentations to publishing office staff and at publishers' meetings. Engage publishers as advocates of their own newspapers' preservation.
- K-12 educators: Involve them in creation of grade-specific lesson plans - public school conferences, presentations to university Education students.
- Public libraries: panel presentations with partner public libraries about working together on newspaper preservation; workshop presentations at district library association meetings; conference calls with public library directors.
- Researchers, teachers, archivists, and librarians: Connect at historical association meetings and conferences; panel presentations at archivist society conferences; vendor booths, brochures, and flyers about newspaper preservation at relevant conferences.
- Standards: Follow digital preservation standards and provide education to stakeholders about the standards.

## Obstacles and Risk Factors

Possible risk factors and obstacles in e-prints newspaper preservation include:

- PDF printmasters are not routinely maintained by many publishers.
- Neither libraries nor publishers currently recognize PDF printmasters as preservation master copies that need to be actively preserved on a regular basis.
- Many newspapers don't have the technical expertise or the management policy to preserve their content before it is lost.
- One preservation solution does not fit all newspapers.
- Publishers and libraries do not have a highly successful track record of cooperation to date. Each have different motivations and do not always understand each others importance.

- Publishers are uncomfortable giving permission to third parties to make newspapers freely available online.
- Funding for digital preservation may not be readily available nor is there awareness of the urgency for this "at risk" content.
- Grant-funded staffing is common in most digital newspaper programs across the U.S. right now, and funding any preservation project on grant support raises sustainability concerns.

## Actionable Items

The NDSA and identified stakeholders have an opportunity to address the concerns outlined in this case study. Some ideas that have emerged from discussions within the Content Working Group include:

- Encourage content creators and publishers to archive and preserve news content.
- Educate newspaper publishers on the use of web archiving technologies through online tutorials, etc.
- Provide PDF versions of electronic prints of newspapers.

For more information, to provide feedback, or to get involved, contact [ndsa@loc.gov](mailto:ndsa@loc.gov) (please include the subject line: Content Case Studies).

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<sup>i</sup> [http://digitalpreservation.gov/documents/CRL\\_digiNews\\_report\\_110502.pdf](http://digitalpreservation.gov/documents/CRL_digiNews_report_110502.pdf)